

REMARKS

Now in the application are claims 1-20, of which claims 1, 7, 14 and 15 are independent. The following comments address all the stated grounds for rejection and place the presently claims as identified above, in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully urge the Examiner to reconsider the outstanding rejections and to pass the application to allowance in view of the remarks set forth below.

Perfection of Priority Claim Under 35 U.S.C. § 119

Applicants enclose herewith an English language translation for the certified priority document filed on September 5, 2003. Also enclosed is a Verification of Translation from the translator who performed the English language translation. Accordingly, Applicants' right of priority is perfected in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.55(a)(4).

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. U.S. 2003/0009240 of Yasui et al (hereinafter "Yasui") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,680,812 of Iwashiro (hereinafter "Iwashiro"). Applicants respectfully traverse each of these rejections on the basis of the following arguments and further contend that neither Yasui nor Iwashiro, alone or in combination establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness with which to reject claims 1-20.

Applicants hereby submit that based on the perfection of their priority claim under 35 U.S.C. § 119 filed September 5, 2003, disqualifies the Yasui reference as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a). Accordingly, Applicants contend the Yasui reference only qualifies as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

Applicants hereby request the Yasui reference be disqualified as prior art altogether based on the attached Statement concerning Common Ownership between the Yasui reference and the instant application. Accordingly, with the disqualification of the Yasui reference based on Common Ownership, the applied combination of Yasui in view of Iwashiro does not detract

from the patentability of claims 1-20. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Statement of Common Ownership

Application Serial No. 10/656,382 and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. U.S. 2003/0009240 were, at the time the invention of application Serial No. 10/656,382 was made, owned by Honda Giken Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above Remarks, applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance.

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Respectfully submitted,

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